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**Key To Strands:** Front Cover-FC, Super Scary  
Story-SSS, Our Haunted World-OHW, Strange But  
True-SBT, Puzzles-PUZ, Classic Serial-CS, The  
Unexplained-TU.

**Photographs:** A.C. Press SBT1(t, b), SBT2(t, b); Mary  
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**Illustrations:** David Baillie OHW1-2(sp); Luigi Galante  
(Virgil Pomfret Agency) CS1-4(sp), PUZ1-3(sp); Lee  
Gibbons TU1-2(sp); John Higgins SBT1-2(sp); Paul  
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Eaglemoss Publications Ltd,  
7 Cromwell Road, London SW7 2HR  
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Printed by: CSM Impact, England  
Colour origination by: Colourscan, Singapore

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**THE SPINECHILLER**  
Collection

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Frankenstein  
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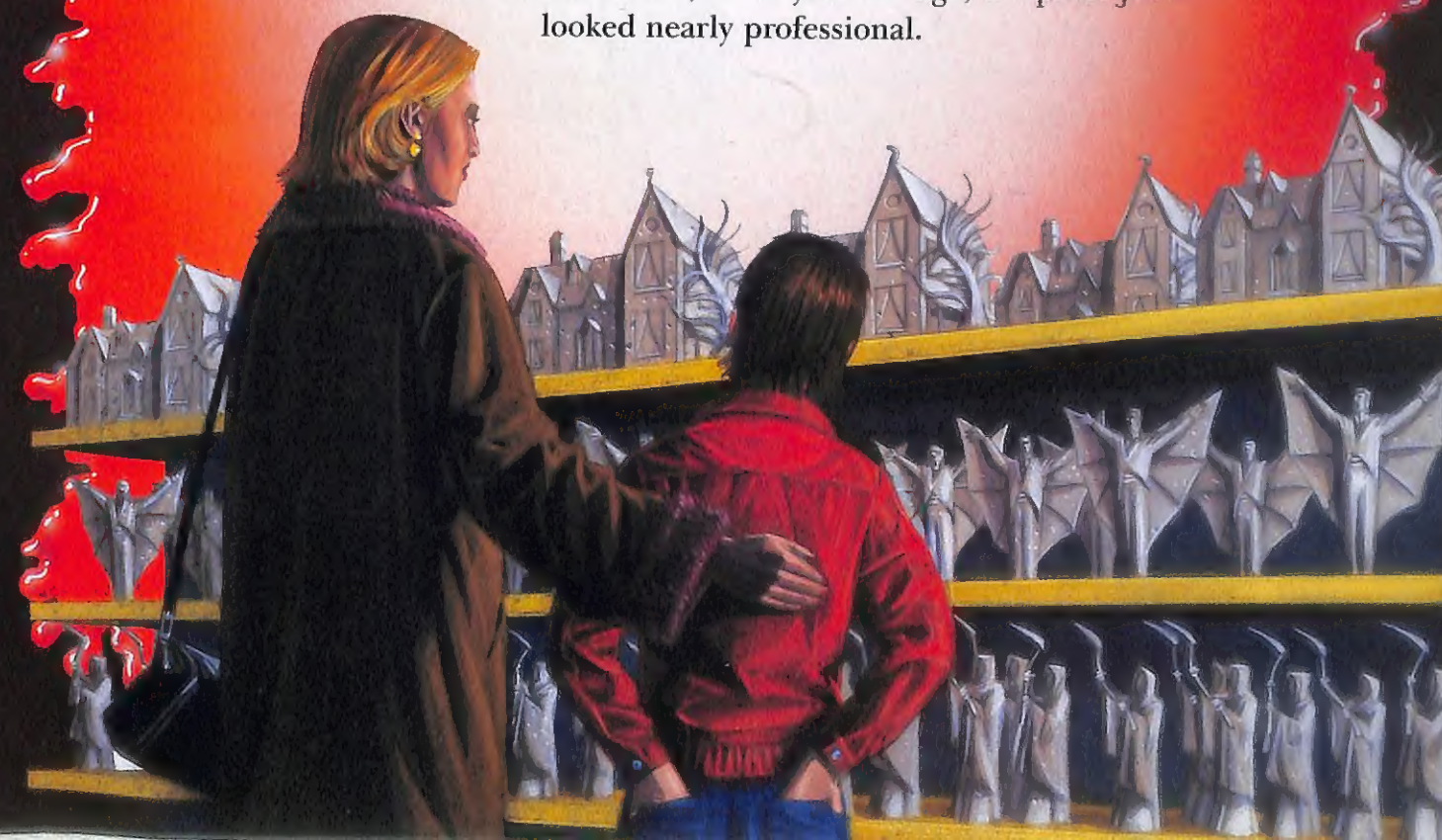
**PUZZLES**  
Creepy Crawlies

# GRIM REAPER



he shop was called The Plaster Patch, and it was one  
of Jimmy Tyler's traditional stops in the weeks  
before Hallowe'en. The Plaster Patch sold hundreds  
of unfinished ceramic statues and figurines, plus the  
paints and brushes needed to decorate them. At  
Christmas time the shelves were full of little plaster Christmas  
trees, snowmen, reindeer, and Santas. In spring the shop  
offered an assortment of bunnies, ducklings, and Easter baskets.  
But October was Jimmy's favourite month. That's when The  
Plaster Patch offered its widest array of ceramic decorations,  
ranging from vampires and werewolves to pumpkins and  
haunted houses.

Ever since Jimmy had been old enough to hold a paintbrush,  
his mother had taken him to The Plaster Patch to buy figurines  
he could paint for Hallowe'en. His early efforts had been little  
more than black and orange paint slapped over a Frankenstein's  
monster statue. But as he grew older, Jimmy's technique became  
more and more refined. Now, at 12 years of age, his paint jobs  
looked nearly professional.





"So, what would you like to buy this year?" Jimmy's mother asked as they walked up and down the aisles. "Your budget is ten pounds, remember."

For the next half an hour Jimmy struggled to select the perfect combination of statues to paint. At first he thought about buying a large plaster haunted house, but it was almost ten pounds all by itself. He then considered buying a bunch of little low-priced figurines, but they wouldn't be much of a challenge for him to paint.

Finally, Jimmy settled on four medium-sized plaster figures about two or three pounds each. One was an evil-looking jack-o'-lantern with a leering smile. The second figure was a classic Dracula-style vampire standing with its long cape outstretched. The third was an ogre-type monster covered with blistering boils. And the fourth, Jimmy's favourite, was a replica of the Grim Reaper. It stood about 15cm tall and consisted of a faceless person in a large, flowing robe holding a scythe with a large curved blade.

"Why do you like that one so much?" Jimmy's mother asked as they drove home.

"I don't know," Jimmy said with a shrug as he held the unpainted statue before him, studying it from various angles. "It's so simple. I mean, the guy doesn't even have a face. There's just an empty space in the robe where his head should be. That's what makes it so scary."

"You're right, Jimmy," his mother agreed, catching a glimpse of the figure out

of the corner of her eye. "It's creepy. When you've finished painting it, we can put it on the shelf by the front door so the kids can see it when they come trick-or-treating."



**A**s soon as they got home, Jimmy's mother covered the kitchen table with newspapers. Then Jimmy laid out the paints and brushes he'd need to complete his ceramic creations.

"OK, you're first," he said, picking up the Grim Reaper figurine.

As his pet cat, Tibby, looked on, Jimmy began painting the Reaper's curved blade a metallic silver. Next he painted the tool's handle dark brown, to simulate wood. The figure's two exposed hands he painted skeletal white, then he covered the remainder of the figure in pure black.

"I wonder if I should do anything with the face," Jimmy said, showing his mum the finished product. "Perhaps I should put some glitter in the empty space."

"I think you should leave it empty," his mother advised as she added birdseed to the cage where Louie, the Tyler's pet lovebird, resided. "Sometimes what you don't see is scarier than what you do."

Jimmy followed his mother's suggestion. He left the Grim Reaper's face pure black and, when the paint had dried, he put his creation on the shelf in the hall. It was the first thing his father saw when he came home from work that evening.



"Whoa, what on Earth is that?" Jimmy's father asked as he put down his briefcase.

"It's the Grim Reaper," Jimmy explained. "He's supposed to be the angel of death, the guy who comes to take you away when -"

"Please, I know who the Grim Reaper is," his father interrupted with a nervous laugh. "I jog for a half an hour every morning just to stay ahead of him!" He shuddered. "Boy, you did a great job!"

"Thanks Dad," Jimmy replied. "Come and see the other things I got at The Plaster Patch?"

Jimmy led his father to the lounge, where the remaining figurines were awaiting his paintbrush. With their backs turned towards the entrance hall, he and his father were unable to see the Grim Reaper's hand as it twitched ever so slightly.

"Hey, where's my Grim Reaper?" Jimmy called out the following morning.



"What are you talking about?" his mother shouted from her bedroom upstairs.

"My Grim Reaper statue!" Jimmy repeated. "It's not here! It vanished!"

"What in the world are you talking about, son?" Jimmy's father said as he hurried down the stairs, adjusting his tie.

"Look," Jimmy said, pointing to the shelf. "Last night my Grim Reaper was standing right there. Now it's gone!"



**I**ndeed, the space the figurine had occupied the night before was now empty.

"Oh yes! What are you trying to do, Jimmy, give us a little pre-Hallowe'en scare?" his father said with a knowing smile.

"I didn't move it," Jimmy insisted. He paused and eyed his father suspiciously. "Wait a minute. You were up at six o'clock, weren't you? Where did you go? To take your morning run?"

"Sure," his father admitted. "But I didn't move the statue. Why would I do a thing like that?"

"To scare me!" Jimmy replied, forcing out a nervous laugh. "Right?"

"I swear, I didn't lay a hand on your spooky little statue," his father insisted, holding up his right hand as if preparing to take an oath.

Suddenly Jimmy's mother cried out from the kitchen. Alarmed, Jimmy and his dad ran to her side.

"Look!" she cried pointing to Louie's cage.



There, lying face up on the bottom of its cage, its tiny claws pointing straight up in the air, was their beautiful lovebird – dead.

Immediately, Jimmy's heart sank into his stomach. They'd bought Louie two years ago when he'd been studying the South American rain-forest in Geography. He had brightened the Tyler home with his cheerful singing and lovely, vibrant

gloves, then carefully removed Louie's body from its cage and placed it in a plastic storage bag. She then placed the feathered corpse in the extra fridge the family kept in the garage. The body would stay there until they could bury it later that afternoon.



**D**uring his classes Jimmy kept thinking back to Louie's death and to the missing Grim Reaper statue. Could there be a connection? The logical part of Jimmy's mind dismissed the idea as pure nonsense. The statue was nothing but a piece of plaster. It wasn't alive. Hundreds, maybe even thousands, of the very same statue were sold every year. How could the one he had painted be responsible for what happened to his lovebird?

Still, another part of Jimmy's mind, the part that thrived on scaring him with creepy thoughts, wouldn't let him dismiss the idea. The Grim Reaper was the angel of death, and as soon as Jimmy had brought it into his house, something had died. The creature had to be found before it could strike again.

"We hereby commit Louie the lovebird to the soil," Jimmy's mother said grimly as Jimmy laid the bird's makeshift cardboard coffin in the hole they'd dug at the back of their garden. "May he rest in peace."

With a shovel Jimmy covered his beloved pet's coffin with dirt. Then he and his mother stood silently over the grave for a few minutes before returning to the house.

colours. To Jimmy, losing Louie was like losing an old friend.

"I don't understand," he said. "Louie was fine last night."

"Well, son," these things happen," his father said, placing a comforting hand on his son's shoulder. "Pets die, sometimes for no known reason, but life goes on."

"So what do we do with him?" Jimmy asked. "Throw him in the bin?"

"I think Louie deserves better than that," his mother said. "When you get home after school, we'll give him a decent burial at the back of the garden."

Jimmy watched with rapt attention as his mother slipped on a pair of rubber

"Oh, no!" Jimmy's mother gasped, putting her hand to her mouth as soon as she'd stepped inside. "Not Tibby, too!"

Jimmy couldn't believe his eyes. Tibby, their eight-year-old cat, was lying in the middle of the kitchen, totally motionless.

"Tibby!" Jimmy shouted, hoping that the cat was merely asleep. "Tibby, wake up! Please, wake up!"

But the cat didn't move.

"Mum, do you think Tibby is...?" Jimmy began, but he choked off his sentence before he could complete it.

"Don't touch her," his mother commanded as Jimmy reached down to feel the feline's fur. "Let me put on some gloves."

As his mother looked under the sink, Jimmy walked over to the empty shelf in the entrance hall. The Grim Reaper statue still hadn't turned up. But since its mysterious disappearance, two members of the Tyler household had come to abrupt and inexplicable ends.

"This can't be a coincidence," Jimmy said to himself. "That awful statue is actually killing things! First Louie. Now Tibby. Who's next?"

Jimmy had a hard time falling asleep that night. All he could think about was that creepy Grim Reaper statue sneaking around his house, looking for his next victim. He imagined his father going out for his morning jog and suddenly collapsing of a heart attack. He pictured his mother standing at the kitchen counter making dinner, only to grab her head in pain and fall to the floor, dead from a massive stroke. In each scene, lurking in the shadows, was the Grim Reaper, his silver scythe sparkling in deadly triumph.

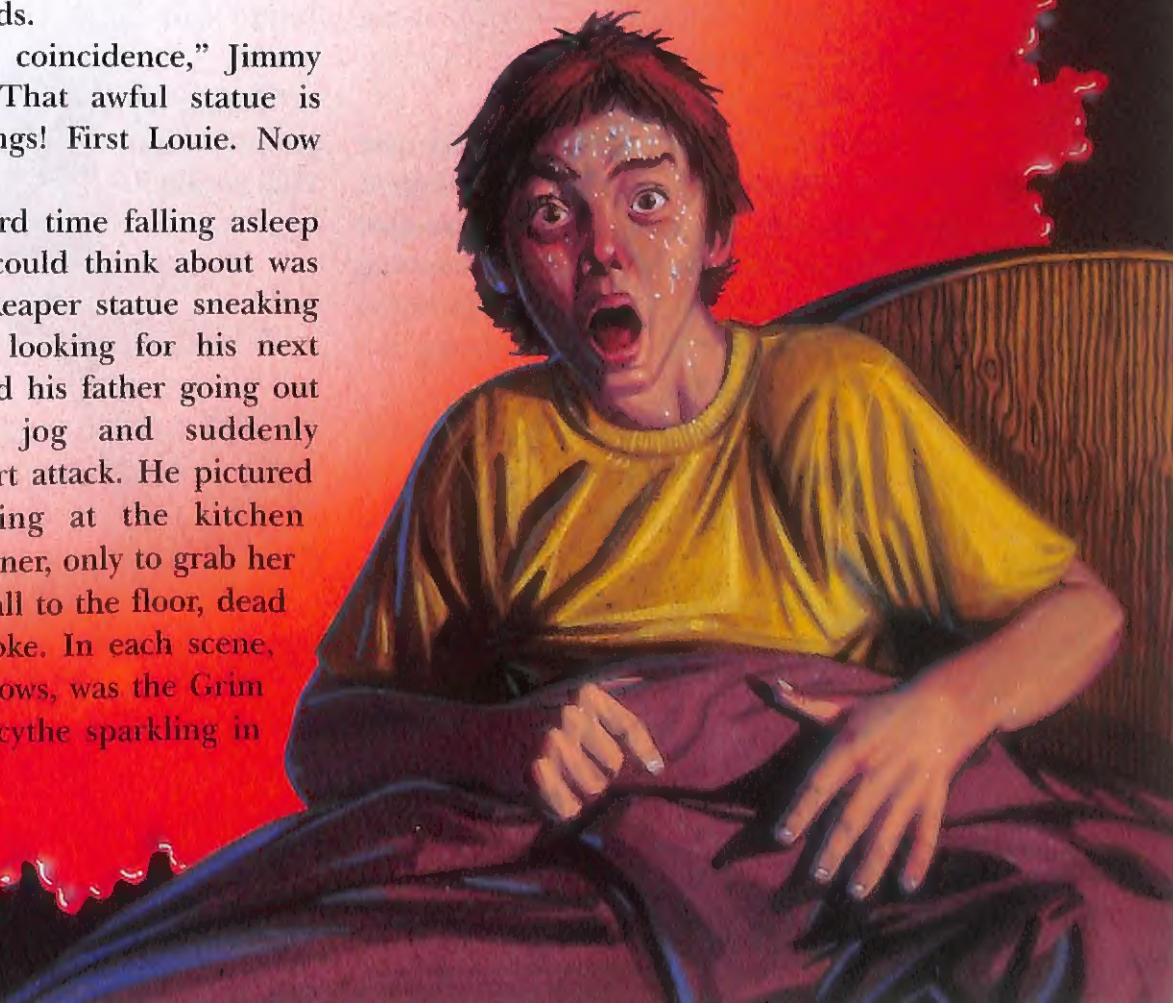
Finally, despite his anxieties, Jimmy managed to drift off to sleep. But his rest was painfully short. At the stroke of midnight his eyes snapped awake and he found his body covered in sweat. His heart was pounding like a bass drum, and his breath came in short, shallow gasps.

He was being crushed by fear. But the fear of what? Why was his body reacting as if he were in danger?

Just then Jimmy heard the sound of something skittering across the carpet. Instantly he bolted upright. He scanned the dimly lit room for signs of movement, but all he could see were indistinct blobs of grey.

Determined to locate the intruder, Jimmy reached over to turn on his bedside lamp. But just as he was fumbling for the switch, he felt a sharp pain across the back of his right hand.

"Ow!" he cried, putting his hand to his lips. His skin tasted wet and salty, and he





immediately recognised the flavour of blood. It was as if he'd just been cut by some kind of blade!

Jimmy was about to shout for his parents when something landed on the back of his neck. It felt light and fuzzy, almost like his cat. But Tibby was dead! He reached back and grappled for it, and his fingers felt the soft, velvety folds of what appeared to be fabric. Then the sharp, searing pain of another slash ripped across his knuckles.

"It's the Grim Reaper!" his mind screamed. "It's trying to kill me!"

Now reacting out of pure, terror-driven instinct, Jimmy threw himself backwards against his hard wooden headboard. The impact nearly knocked him senseless, but at the same time it seemed, for a few moments, to dislodge his unwelcome visitor.

Rolling out of bed and falling to the floor with a painful thump, Jimmy looked back at his pillow. There he caught a fleeting glimpse of a small creature leaping to its feet and brandishing a long crescent-shaped blade.

Thinking fast, Jimmy grabbed the bottom edge of his bed covers and flipped them upwards, catching the Grim Reaper beneath them like a cresting wave catching an unprepared swimmer. He then gathered the covers up in his arms, trapping the killer figurine within the folds.

He could feel the tiny figure thrashing about within the covers, and he heard the fabric tearing as the deadly blade slashed a path to freedom.

"You're toast!" he cried.

Throwing his bed covers to the floor, he began to stomp on them with his bare feet, wincing in pain each time the tiny blade slashed at the soles of his feet.

Then, certain he'd killed the little beast, he stopped and peered into the folds of the fabric. They moved! The Reaper was about to escape!

Looking about, Jimmy saw his large science text-book on his desk. He grabbed the book and slammed it hard on to the lump that was the Grim Reaper. Something shattered beneath the covers but, just to be sure, Jimmy slammed the book down again and again – and again.

Blinded by the tears that had welled up in his eyes, Jimmy finally dropped the text-book and staggered away. He kept his eyes locked on the pile of bedcovers lying in the middle of his room, looking for signs of movement, but there were none.

Finally able to breathe once more, he snapped on his bedroom light and ever so slowly peeled the covers back.

The carpet beneath them was covered with tiny bits of painted plaster. The jagged shards were almost unrecognisable. Jimmy had clearly smashed the evil statue to bits.

"Jimmy Tyler one, Grim Reaper zero," Jimmy said triumphantly. "Happy Hallowe'en."



A few days later when the Tyler family sat down to dinner, Jimmy's father brought up the subject of the Grim Reaper. "I wonder whatever happened to that statue?" he said.

"I don't know," Jimmy replied with a shrug. He'd decided not to tell either of his parents about his harrowing encounter

with the animated figurine several nights earlier, since he knew they'd never believe him.

"You know, you still have those other figures to paint," his mother reminded him. "And there are only two days left until Hallowe'en. You'd better start them tonight or you won't have them finished in time."

Finished with her meal, Jimmy's mother stood up and walked into the lounge, where he'd put the three unpainted statues.

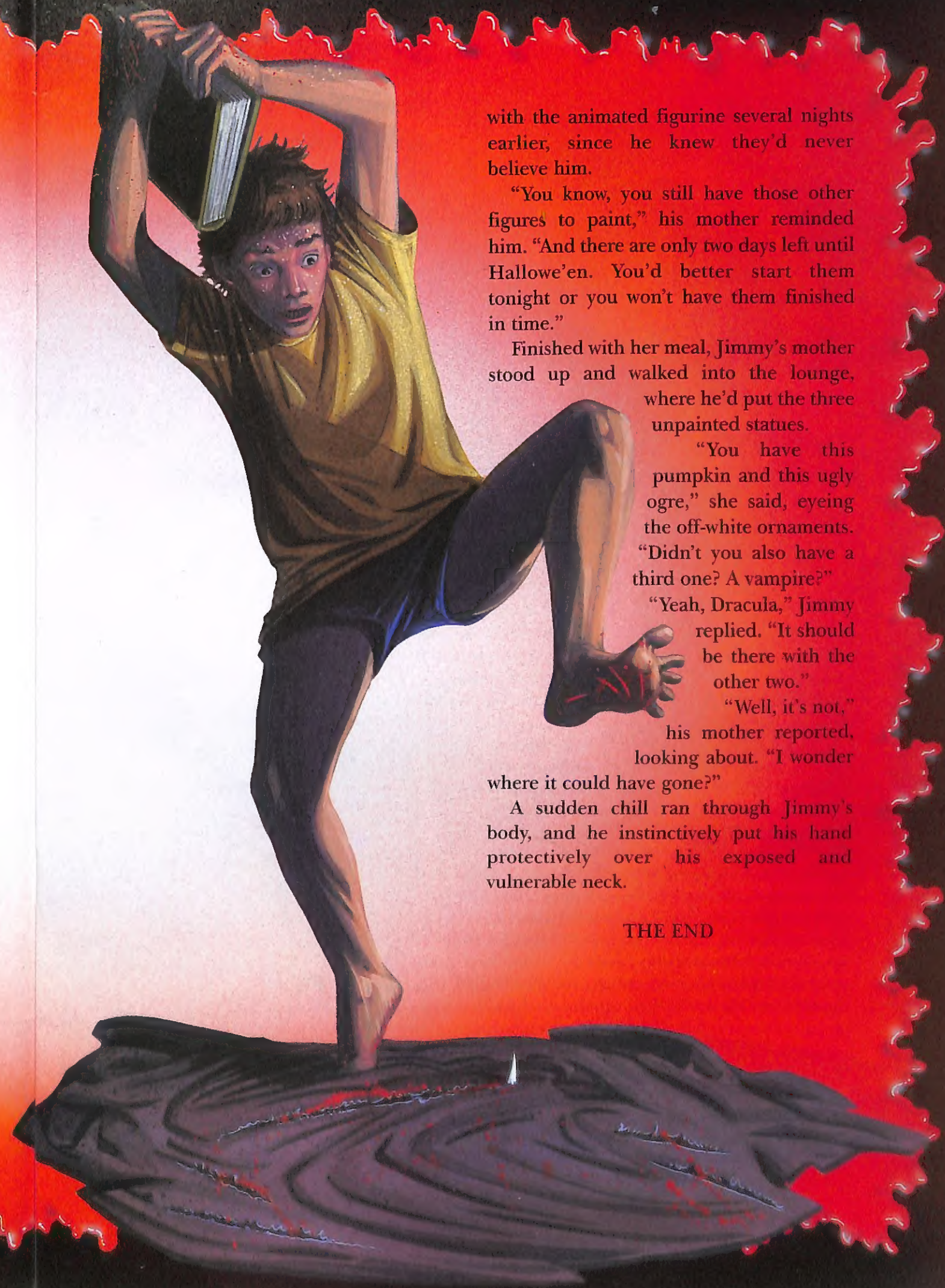
"You have this pumpkin and this ugly ogre," she said, eyeing the off-white ornaments. "Didn't you also have a third one? A vampire?"

"Yeah, Dracula," Jimmy replied. "It should be there with the other two."

"Well, it's not," his mother reported, looking about. "I wonder where it could have gone?"

A sudden chill ran through Jimmy's body, and he instinctively put his hand protectively over his exposed and vulnerable neck.

THE END





## OUR HAUNTED WORLD

Greece – in times ancient and modern – has been the setting for some of the world's weirdest tales...



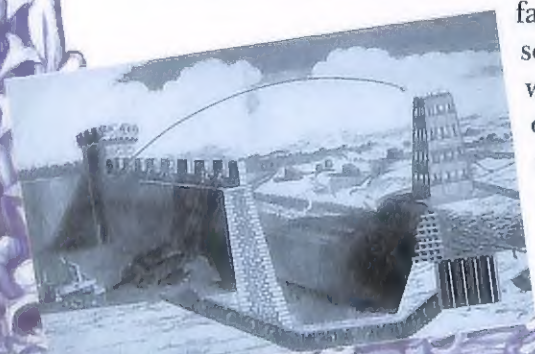
### MYTHS AND MIRRORS

In the days when the gods were said to dwell on Earth, the Greeks believed that to dream of one's own reflection was an omen that the dreamer was soon to die. And then, if someone did die, they believed that their spirit would go to the Moon to be purified before travelling on to heaven. For spirits coming from heaven to be reborn on Earth, the Moon was also thought to be the halfway point where bodies for life on Earth were allocated.

### GREEK FIRE

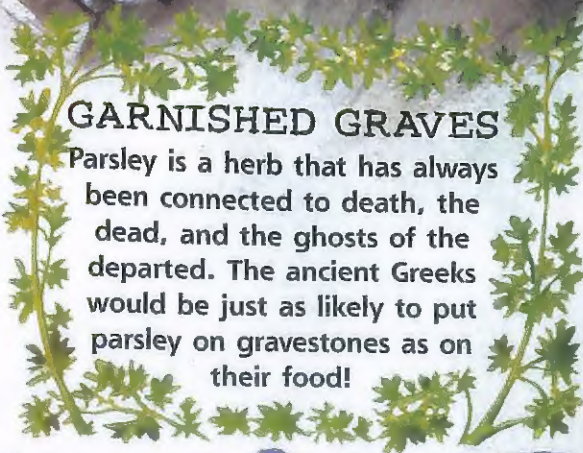
In the Middle Ages, rumours of a terrifying 'rain of unquenchable fire' ran through armies going into war. Called 'Greek fire', the scariest thing about this blazing, burning, death-bringing stuff that fell from the sky was that water only made the flames burn even more fiercely! In their ignorance, victims of Greek fire thought that the enemy had supernatural powers. In

fact, the closely guarded secret recipe for the weapon was just a mixture of chemicals. When set alight and catapulted into an advancing army, its defeat was certain.



### GARNISHED GRAVES

Parsley is a herb that has always been connected to death, the dead, and the ghosts of the departed. The ancient Greeks would be just as likely to put parsley on gravestones as on their food!



### DAIMONS TO DEMONS

The ancient Greeks believed that daimons acted as go-betweens between humans and the spirit world of the gods. Daimons might be either good or bad. If, like Socrates the philosopher, you had a good daimon, then you would get a lifetime of useful advice and warnings. A bad daimon only ever led you into trouble! Only much later was the name changed to *demon*, and by then all demons were thought to be utterly evil.



▲ The Corinth Canal is just 5m wider than the Anson 19 that flew through it!

### GHOSTLY RESCUE

In 1941, when Bill Corfield's elder brother Jimmy was killed in action as an RAF pilot, Bill – who had idolised him – decided to join the RAF. Bill qualified as an RAF pilot and, in 1947, had to fly a small, Anson 19 twin-engined plane from Italy to Athens. On the way, and too late to turn back, a wild storm began. Flying just 50ft (15.24m) above the sea in zero visibility, the rugged coast suddenly came into view. With no beaches in sight and fuel running out, Bill felt sure he would have to ditch the plane in the sea.

But then he spotted the narrow entrance to the Corinth Canal and dived the plane into it. Bill strongly felt his dead brother's presence, so he relaxed on the controls 'to allow Jimmy to fly the plane'. Despite the raging storm, Bill and his crew of two described a 'cathedral-like silence' and marvelled that the plane was flying in a dead straight line! Emerging from the canal, Bill felt his brother's presence leave the plane.

Taking the controls again, he turned the plane 'on instinct' and the lights of Athens – and safety – came into view. As they landed on the runway, the fuel ran out. No one ever believed that they had flown 6.3km through the narrow canal, an 'impossible' trip even in perfect weather, as the canal was only five metres wider than the plane! But Bill knew, without a doubt, that his pilot brother's ghost had saved all of their lives.



# 'ERE WE GO, EARWIG-O!

A friend of a friend was travelling round the Greek islands...



**1** When the girl's ferry arrived on one of the islands, it was too late for her to arrange a room for the night.



**2** She decided to sleep on the beach and find a room the next morning.



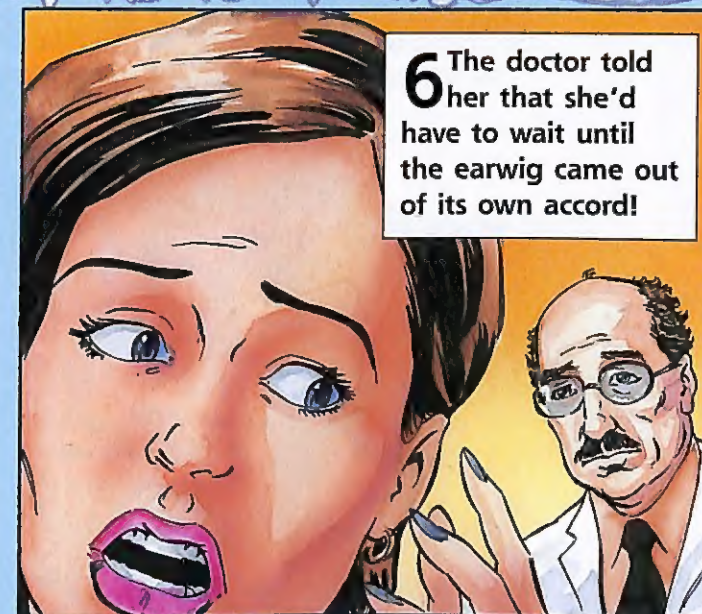
**3** While she slept, something crept into her warm, comfy ear!



**4** Two days later, the girl had bad ear pains. The local doctor asked her if she'd slept on the beach. He tut-tutted to hear of her night under the stars.



**5** The doctor told her that she'd picked up an earwig – a bug named for its habit of creeping into the warm human ear. But it was too far in for the doctor to remove.



**6** The doctor told her that she'd have to wait until the earwig came out of its own accord!

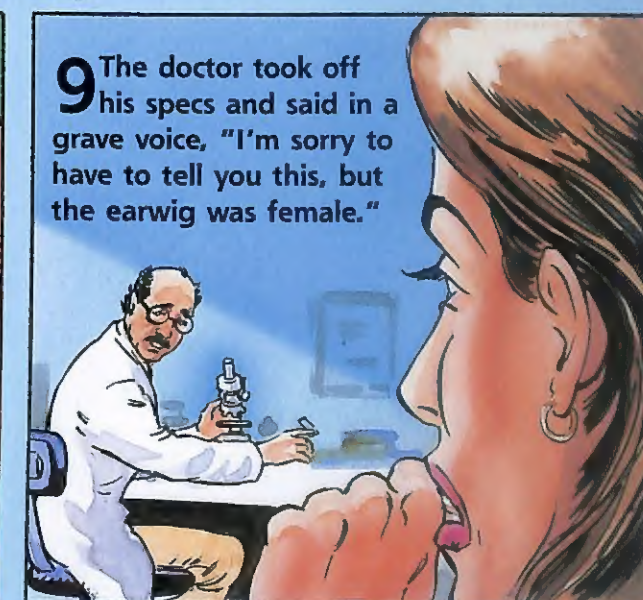
**7** After what seemed like an age of endless earache, the girl was overjoyed to find a dead earwig on her pillow one morning.



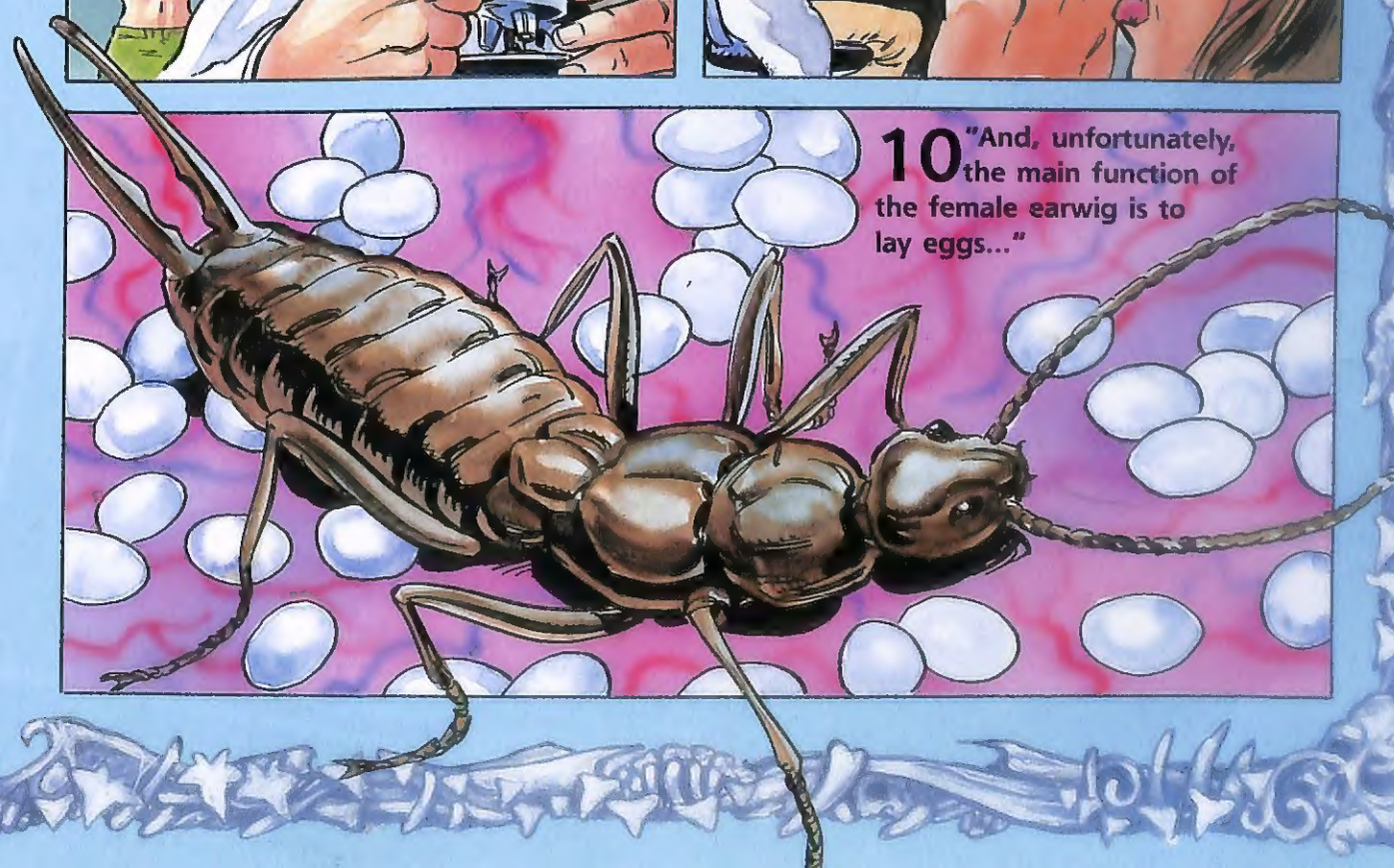
**8** She raced to show it to the doctor, who put it straight under the microscope.



**9** The doctor took off his specs and said in a grave voice, "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but the earwig was female."



**10** "And, unfortunately, the main function of the female earwig is to lay eggs..."







# WINCHESTER HOUSE

**Special Investigation File: 46**

**Subject: a mystery mansion**

**Place: Winchester House, California**

SpineChiller creates a file

Evidence no: 46/2  
A scene from the American Civil War



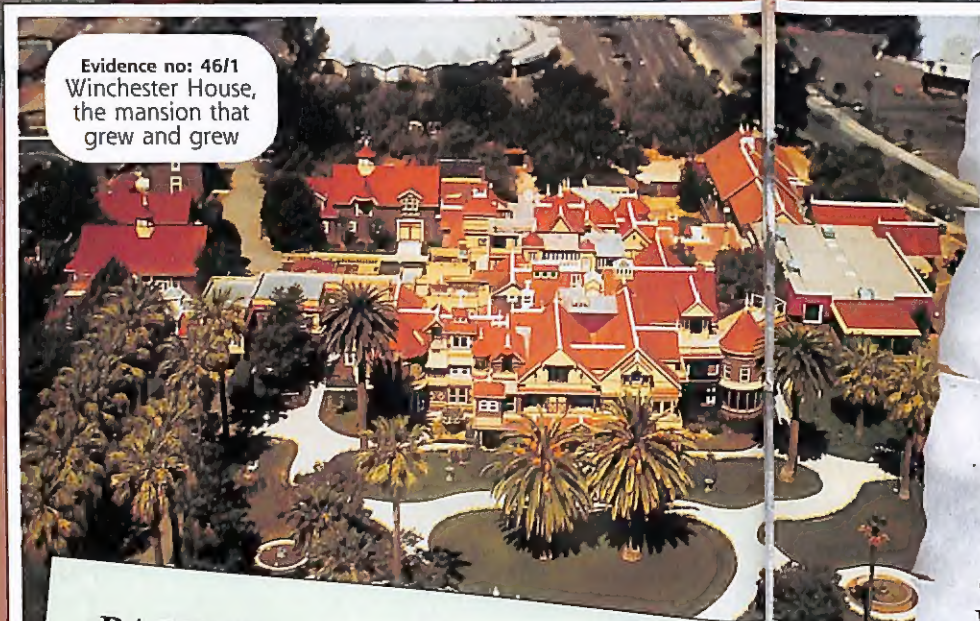
June 1884

Dear Fran

Did you know that after William's death, Sarah claimed one of the largest inheritances in America? It's a good job too because this renovation will cost her a fortune. She only moved into the farmhouse a week ago but, already, dozens of builders, carpenters, servants and gardeners have started work. There is no master building plan as such. Sarah will be consulting her spirits as she goes along! Apparently, she is terrified that if she stops work for just one moment, the curse will catch up with her. So she has vowed to build 24 hours a day. What will her neighbours think? I shall keep you informed.

Love Elizabeth

Evidence no: 46/1  
Winchester House, the mansion that grew and grew



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the late 1800s, at the height of the American Civil War, Sarah Pardee of New Haven, Connecticut, married William Winchester, the heir to the Winchester rifle fortune. Tragically, Sarah's husband and baby daughter both died. But after their deaths came a peculiar twist. When Sarah consulted a medium, she was told they had been struck by a family curse. Spirits killed by the Winchester rifle were on the revenge. Her only way out was to buy a house in the American West and build more rooms – as the spirits directed. Sarah did exactly that. She moved to California, bought an eight-room farmhouse and began her never-ending construction job.



Evidence no: 46/3  
This is the only known photograph of Sarah Winchester, which was taken in secret by her gardener

February 1921  
**IT'S A MONSTROSITY!**  
Outraged neighbours said today that the Winchester widow has turned her house into a monstrosity.

Winchester House used to have eight rooms but now has 160, sprawling over four floors! In total, there are 467 doorways, 1000 windows, 40 staircases and six kitchens. The house is so big that even her staff need maps to get around! Neighbours are furious that the building work has been going on for 37 years and looks set to continue. The 81-year-old widow is getting weirder notions by the day, they claim. She has built rooms within rooms, fireplaces that don't reach the roof, staircases that lead nowhere, and doors that open on to walls and into thin air.

## THE INVESTIGATOR'S REPORT

Did the Winchester widow really believe she had to build and build to avoid the curse, or was she just an eccentric who fancied a millionaire's mansion for herself?

Sarah did appear to take the Winchester spirits very seriously. Apparently, every night at midnight, she sat in a secret 'séance room' at a table set for 13 ghostly guests. It was here, allegedly, that the spirits consulted her. No one else was ever invited to the meetings.

To keep her workers busy so she would avoid the curse, Sarah made them build rooms, demolish them and put them back up again! At one point, the mansion towered over seven floors and had hundreds of rooms.

But if the Winchester spirits really wanted to get revenge, I doubt they would have granted her every extravagance she could want – like balconies, statues and waterfalls!

Inside the house were 13 bathtubs, rooms with 13 windows and chandeliers with 13 lights. If Sarah thought she was cursed, she would have avoided this unlucky number. Then again, they could have been built under ghostly orders.

And finally comes the matter of the doors opening into thin air. Did Sarah build them to kill the spirits off? I remain undecided.

Evidence no: 46/4  
The rambling roof lines of the mystery mansion



Evidence no: 46/5  
A trap door?



Evidence no: 46/6  
A staircase leading nowhere



Unexplained

## CONCLUSION

Sarah Winchester's construction job lasted 38 years! She died in 1922 at the ripe old age of 82. The answers to the mystery mansion went with her to the grave.



CLASSIC



SERIAL

## Chapter 2

# Frankenstein

Retold from a story by Mary Shelley

I stood in my laboratory staring at the figure that I had created as it started to come to life. Already, one hideous, dull eye had opened and the enormous chest had started to heave.

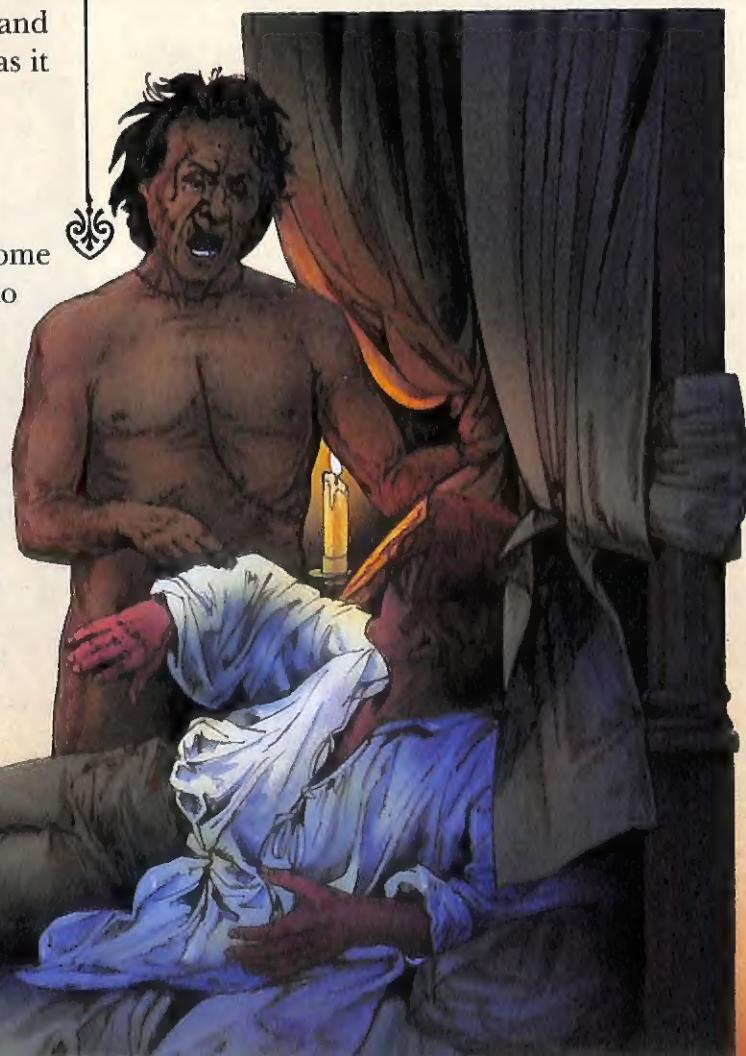
I had worked so hard for so long solely to create life from death. For this, I had deprived myself of rest and health, of friendship and love. But, now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream had vanished completely. As I watched the creature come to life, breathless horror and disgust filled my soul. Unable to watch as it rose to stand, I rushed out of the room.

I paced the courtyard outside my home for many hours before returning to my bed and falling asleep. But my sleep was disturbed by the wildest of dreams. I saw Elizabeth standing before me looking beautiful. I embraced and then kissed her, but as our lips touched, her features began to change. Finally, horror of horrors, I found myself kissing a corpse. I awoke full of dread to discover that cold sweat covered my forehead and my teeth were chattering.

In front of me stood the monster – my monster. His eyes were fixed

on me. His jaws opened and he tried to make a sound, but nothing came out. His thin lips formed a hideous grin that wrinkled his leathery cheeks. I stood there silent, frozen with fear.

Next the creature dropped his ugly, square jaw open again and grunted. Then his arm stretched out towards me like a giant crane and his massive, clumsy hand slowly, shakily unclenched. His first finger,



bulging with unnaturally large muscles, was pointing straight at me. I could stand no more, so fled down the stairs and out of the building. Why had I failed to notice how revolting the creature was as I worked to make it? Had I become weary of beauty and hardened to vile sights by my many visits to graves and slaughter houses? Or was it that my work had driven me insane? For it was only now the monster was alive that I fully realised what I had created. It was ghastly – not merely ugly but completely horrific. Disgust overcame me and I felt sick. What on earth had I done?

For some time, I don't know how long, I roamed the streets in a terrible daze. Then fortune smiled upon me and I heard a friendly voice.

"My dear Frankenstein!"

Henry Clerval stood before me.

"How very glad I am to see you after all this time!" he exclaimed.

Then Henry took me by the arm and started to lead me through the streets. As we walked, he chatted about my family. He told me that they were well, but missed hearing from me. I was so busy feeling guilty that it was only as we turned into my street that I realised we were heading towards my home – and my workshop. I started to tremble and tried to make excuses that would turn Henry back. But he just continued walking and said, "My dear Victor, I must find out what has been keeping you away from me and your loving family for so long."

It was all I could do to make Henry stay downstairs for some moments while I tidied up my laboratory. Laughingly he agreed, declaring, "You are a strange man, Victor Frankenstein. You're so serious about life."

I walked slowly up the stairs. Each step was harder than the last. For all I knew, the monster might still be roaming about inside



my rooms. My whole body shook with terror as I fumbled for the door knob. My heart was pounding so violently that I thought it would burst right out of my chest. Finally, I opened the door and ventured inside.

I could not believe my good fortune. The ghastly monster had gone. I checked and double-checked. Apart from a few pieces of upturned furniture, there was no sign that it had ever been there. It was almost as if I had completely imagined the creature. I quickly busied myself, hiding gory materials and my notes in cupboards and chests. Sweat poured from my brow until the salty beads temporarily blinded my eyes. Wiping them away, I glanced down at the spot where my floor rug should have been. It had gone, but I thought little of it.

Suddenly, Henry appeared in my room. In his opinion, I had kept him waiting long

Underlined words are explained in WORD POWER.



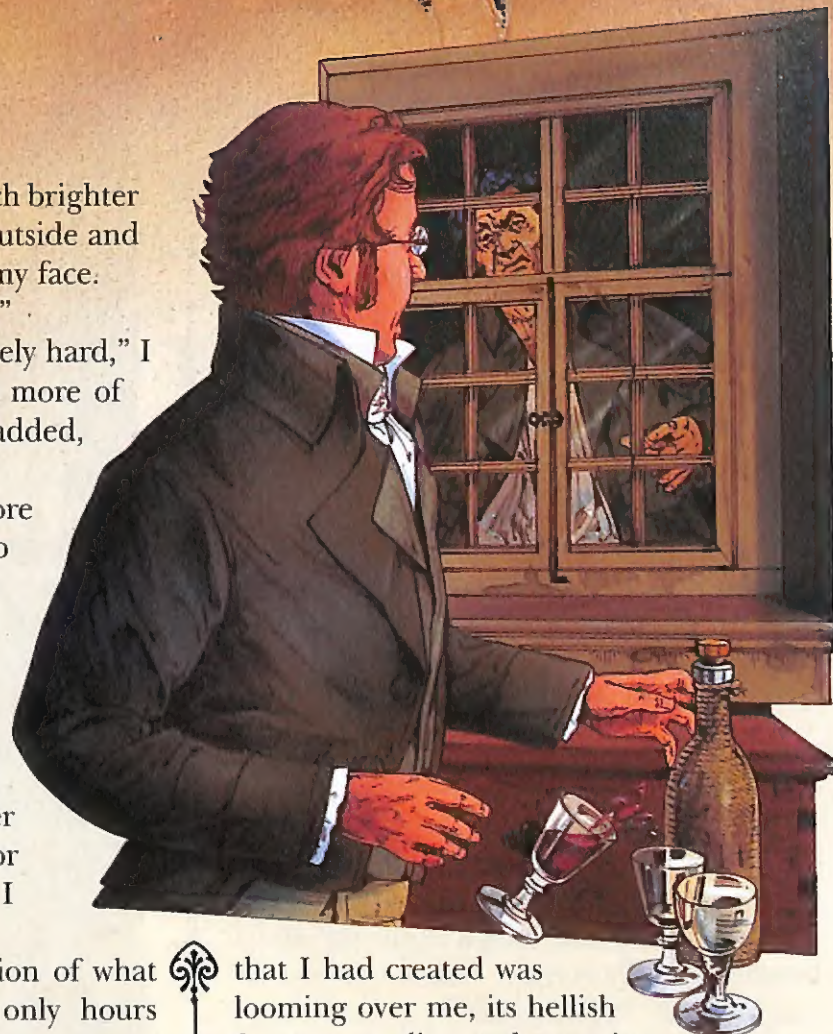
enough. The light there was much brighter than it had been in the streets outside and my friend gasped when he saw my face.

"But Victor, how ill you look!"

"I have been working extremely hard," I replied and paused to wipe yet more of the sweat from my brow. Then I added, "But now I have finished."

My fever burned even more fiercely as I did my very best to entertain Henry and to act normally. I tried to make conversation, but could not remain calm. My voice and my laughter were harsh. I started to feel sick again and my head spun. When I attempted to offer Henry a glass of wine, my poor hands shook so much that I couldn't hold the bottle.

Suddenly, the awful realisation of what had happened in my rooms only hours before struck me fully. I cast a nervous glance towards one of my dirty window panes. Then I thought I caught a glimpse of the monster outside the window and screamed. I fell into a fit as I thought I saw it enter the room. I writhed in agony as it seemed to grab hold of me and crush the life from my body. My vision blurred and I couldn't breathe. The last thing I heard was Henry's cry.



that I had created was looming over me, its hellish features snarling and snapping.

As I slowly regained my health, Henry explained that he had not told Elizabeth and my father about my true condition in order to spare them grief. He had, instead, said that I was recovering at speed from an illness, but was still too unwell to write to them both. I thanked my dear friend from

## WORD POWER

gory – horrific, involving lots of blood

writhed – twisted; squirmed

ranted – shouted violently

tonic – something, especially a medicine, that increases strength and well-being

devotion – strong and loyal attachment

rallied – recovered; felt better

fateful – important; significant

My illness lasted for more than three months. Throughout that time, I remained in my bed in Henry's apartment. Sometimes I awoke and ranted until my lips frothed with foam. At other moments, I sat up then remained totally still, my eyes wild with madness. Most of the time I slept, but far from peacefully. This was all according to Henry, who nursed me. I remember nothing except for one long, continuous nightmare. In it, the monster

the bottom of my heart. How very kind and thoughtful he had been, yet again.

Henry suggested that I now write to my father, and then handed me a letter from Elizabeth. No doctor could have prescribed a better tonic. Elizabeth wrote of many lovely things. She told me that the estate was doing well and that my two young brothers were thriving under the care of the marvellous Justine. Most of all, the letter made clear Elizabeth's devotion to me. It truly warmed my heart.

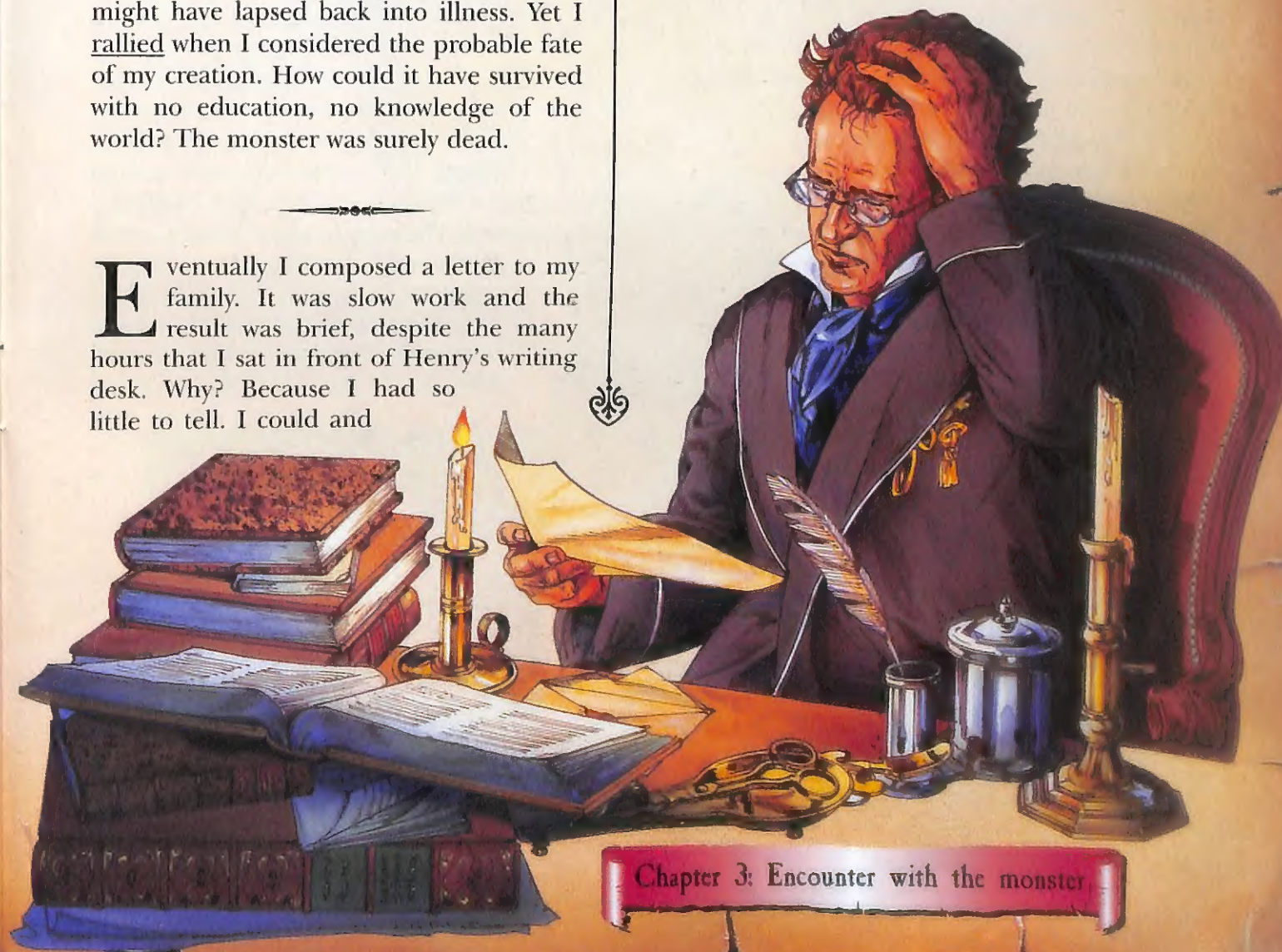
I stayed at Henry's apartment for many more weeks while I rebuilt my strength. At times, as I looked over the letters from Elizabeth and my father, I felt wretched. How could I have ignored my loved ones for so long? How much time did it take to write a letter? The time it took to attach a muscle to a bone, that's all. As I thought this, I shuddered, and if I had been weaker might have lapsed back into illness. Yet I rallied when I considered the probable fate of my creation. How could it have survived with no education, no knowledge of the world? The monster was surely dead.

Eventually I composed a letter to my family. It was slow work and the result was brief, despite the many hours that I sat in front of Henry's writing desk. Why? Because I had so little to tell. I could and

would not say a word about my scientific work, and work had been the only thing in my life for a very long time.

I felt much better when the letter was completed and started gradually to turn my thoughts to the future. Science now revolted me. I decided that I would have to inform my tutors that I could not go back to my studies. I was thinking over what I should do instead when a fateful letter arrived for me. It was from my father and the very worst thing that I had ever had to read. My young brother William, my kind, loving brother, so full of joy and happiness, was dead. According to the Geneva Police, he had been brutally strangled.

As if that were not enough, Captain Walton, I still have to tell you the worst of it. William's beloved nanny, Justine, had been accused of the evil deed. She was to be tried for his murder within the week.







# ALIEN ANIMALS

Alien animals are not creatures from outer space, but earthly species that turn up in unexpected places. How or why they got there is often unexplained. Some might be cases of mistaken identity, others could be unwanted exotic pets or zoo escapees, but what about the rest...

In the UK, the most commonly claimed alien animals are big cats. Not the overfed household pet variety, but wild predators like pumas, cheetahs, and even lions! The frightening felines have been spotted roaming the British countryside. But they are not alone. Kangaroos, hippos, tropical bats, emus and deadly snakes have all turned up in the most unlikely places.

## BODMIN'S BEAST

Many people believe that the 'Beast of Bodmin' is alive and well and living in Cornwall! Sightings of the black puma on Bodmin Moor have come in thick and fast over the years. But, despite searches involving the police and worried farmers, the wild meat-eater is still at large – allegedly.



## WHAT A HOWLER

Ghostly glimpses on a dark night lead to 'sightings' of alien animals.

## SKULLDUGGERY!

Recently, a 14-year-old boy found an animal skull – with fangs – in the River Fowey on Bodmin Moor. Experts at the Natural History Museum in London discovered the skull was that of a leopard.

However, inside the skull was the egg-case of an insect which was identified as a type of tropical cockroach that belongs in a warm environment – not on windswept Bodmin Moor!

Scratch marks on the skull led experts to believe that a knife had been used to remove the leopard's skin. They decided it had probably been a hunter's trophy which was planted in the River Fowey – nearly convincing everyone that the Beast of Bodmin had been found! A few fuzzy photographs and the occasional paw print remain the only evidence so far.



▲ **CAT SNAPPING**  
A mystery sighting at Zennor in Cornwall snapped in 1988.



▲ **NOT THE BEAST OF BODMIN MOOR**  
The leopard skull found in the River Fowey and identified by the Natural History Museum.



## BIGFOOT

A paw print of a zoo puma (right) shown next to a giant print of the Surrey Puma.

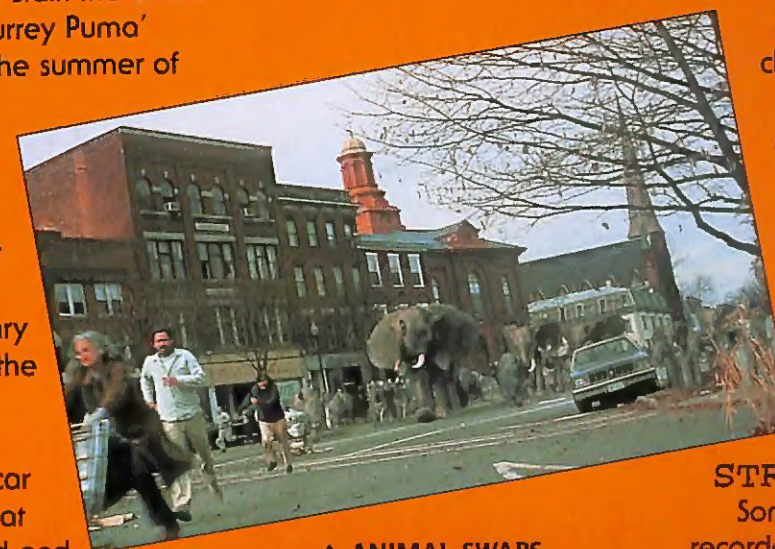
## BEASTLY EXPLANATIONS

The Beast of Bodmin is not the first big cat to allegedly stalk the British countryside. The 'Surrey Puma' made its debut in the summer of 1962 in the south of England and continued to put in appearances on and off for the next twenty years!

Despite extraordinary sightings – such as the claim by two policemen that it jumped over their car bonnet – the big cat was never captured and its remains were never found.

What could be the explanation for these elusive animals? The popular explanation is that big cats and other exotic animals are imported, perhaps illegally into the UK, and then escape zoos or circuses, or are even set loose by their irresponsible owners. But it is unlikely that big cats would survive in the wild in the UK and even more unlikely that they could breed! Besides, no alien animal remains have ever been found to prove that they even exist.

Perhaps the real truth is that some people just jump to conclusions. Maybe the first detailed sighting of an alien animal fuelled their imaginations. So, now, whenever they spot an odd-looking creature or shadow in the distance, they assume it must be an alien beast!



## ANIMAL SWAPS

In the film 'Jumanji', a magical game transports African animals to small-town America.



▲ **FISH OUT OF WATER**  
An Amazon catfish going for a stroll! It really does happen!

## FLYING CATS

But then there is always the possibility that alien animals are linked to UFOs. From 1962-64 Edward Blanks, the manager of Bushylease Farm on the Surrey/Hampshire border, claimed to have repeated sightings of a puma. The strangest part of his story, however, was that unidentified lights appeared on the farmhouse roof just before or after the alien animal was seen or heard.

## STRANGE SIGHTINGS

Some strange sightings were recorded in Florida in the 1960s when a number of catfish escaped from captivity. Apparently, people saw the fish strolling along the pavement. Now, what could be more out of place than a fish out of water! What about a two-metre-high emu stalking woods in Devon? A horse rider said she got the fright of her life when it popped out in front of her! And finally, there's the tale of the kangaroo who bounced down the street in Oxfordshire and knocked a stunned cyclist off his bike!





# CREEPY CRAWLIES PUZZLES

Letter ehe is in **STING** and also in **BITE**,  
 The next is in **PAIN** but not in **fright**,  
 The third's in a **SCREAM**, you're sure to hear,  
**SCARE** holds the next, so too does **FEAR**.  
 The last two are in **CREATURE** ever so small,  
 Look very closely or don't see it at all!

## CLUED-UP!

Can you crack these clues to find six  
 small creatures?



## TREE RIDDLE

Something's hiding in the  
 riddle in the branches (above  
 right). Can you work out  
 what it is?

## ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Write the first, middle or  
 last letter of each picture  
 clue in its corresponding  
 box, to spell a well-armed  
 creepy-crawlie!

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

## FUN FACTS

In Italy in 1659, a group of caterpillars that had  
 eaten a farmer's crops were issued with an order to  
 appear in court. When they failed to appear, a  
 special notice was nailed to a tree asking them to  
 leave the crops alone!

## FREAKY FACTS

The praying mantis is so-called because it  
 sits motionless, with its long forelegs in a  
 praying position, waiting for a living meal  
 to approach. These sinister insects  
 sometimes even eat each other!





# WEB OF INTRIGUE

It's not exactly an incy-wincy spider hiding in this cave! But there are several types (one or two words) in the huge web. Unscramble the letters to name them.

## BUG HUNT!

How many bugs can you count?

## FIENDISH FACTS

If only she'd love 'em and leave 'em – but no, the black widow spider has something much more gruesome in store for the males in her life. After mating she often eats them!

This deadly spider's poison is 15 times stronger than rattlesnake venom.

## FEARSOME FACTS

Spiders inject a mixture of poison and digestive juices into their prey. The poison paralyses their victims while the digestive juices get to work on the flesh, reducing it to a liquid that can be sucked up!

## ANSWERS

CLUED-UP: Money-spider, caterpillar (cat + pillar), ladybird, glow-worm, dragonfly, earwig, ARMED AND DANGEROUS: scorpion, The creepy crawler: are: Snake, Crab, Owl, grasshopper, wasp, flies, mosquito, ant, TREE RIDDLER: insect, WEDDING HORROR: Tarantula, WEB OF INTRIGUE: Trapdoor, assassin, wolf, Black widow, tarantula, funnel-web, BIG HUNT: 10